

Message Text

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TO USMISSION GENEVA

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GENEVA PASS MOUSKEY, ECOSOC DEL.; NAIROBI PASS NOZIGLIA

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SENV, UNEP

SUBJECT: REGIONAL PREPARATORY MEETING FOR UN DESERTIFICATION CONFERENCE

REFERENCE: MOUSKEY, SEIFMAN, LONG TELECONS.

1. THIS CONCERNS RALPH TOWNLEY'S INTEREST IN RECEIVING AN INFORMAL INDICATION OF U.S. WILLINGNESS TO HOST REGIONAL MEETING FOR AMERICAS PREPARATORY TO 1977 UN DESERTIFICATION CONFERENCE, SPECIFICALLY IN CONJUNCTION WITH ANNUAL MEETING OF AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCES (AAAS) SCHEDULED FOR DENVER NEXT FEBRUARY. CONCEPT IS OUTGROWTH OF TOWNLEY'S DISCUSSIONS WITH WALTER ORR ROBERTS, ASPEN INSTITUTE, IN BOSTON LAST FEBRUARY AT AAAS SYMPOSIUM ON ARID LANDS.

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; DEPARTMENT CONSULTED SEPARATELY WITH TOWNLEY AND AAAS

OFFICIALS ON THIS MATTER DURING TOWNLEY'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON LAST MONTH. BASED ON OUR BELIEF THAT IMPORTANT QUESTIONS NEEDED TO BE RESOLVED (E.G., RELATIONSHIP OF AAAS MEETING TO INTERGOVERNMENTAL PREPARATORY MEETING, SPECIFIC RESPONSIBILITIES OF AAAS AND UN REGARDING FACILITIES, FUNDING OF TRANSLATION AND DOCUMENTATION SERVICES; AND DATES AND DURATION), WE SUGGESTED THAT AAAS AND UNEP WORK OUT DETAILS. OUR LAST WORD, VIA AAAS, WAS THAT

(QUOTETOWNLEY IS TALKING IN TERMS OF A 25-PERSON MEETING OF EXPERTS, FUNDED BY THE UN CONFERENCE SECRETARIAT (UNQUOTE).

3. IF CONFERENCE SECRETARIAT IS THINKING IN TERMS OF AN EXPERTS MEETING, THEN INVITATION TO HOST SESSION CAN GO DIRECTLY TO THE AAAS. DEPARTMENT HAS NO SUBSTANTIVE PROBLEM WITH THAT APPROACH, IF, IN FACT, AN EXPERTS MEETING CAN BE JUSTIFIED. THE EXPERTS COULD BENEFIT FROM ATTENDING AAAS COMMITTEE ON ARID LANDS SESSION PRIOR TO PARTICIPATING IN THE REGIONAL PREPARATORY SESSION. CONVERSELY, JUXTAPOSING THE PREPARATORY SESSION WOULD NO DOUBT HELP TO INCREASE HIGH-LEVEL INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC PARTICIPATION IN AAAS MEETING. HOWEVER, AAAS NEEDS TO BE INFORMED PRECISELY BY UNEP ABOUT WHAT THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES WOULD BE.

4. DEPARTMENT'S REACTION TO TOWNLEY'S INTEREST COMPLICATED BY OUR CONTINUING UNCERTAINTY OVER PURPOSE OF PROPOSED MEETING IN DENVER. WE ORIGINALLY BELIEVED REGIONAL PREPARATORY MEETINGS WERE TO BE INTERGOVERNMENTAL IN NATURE, RATHER THAN MEETINGS OF EXPERTS. REPORT OF UNEP GC-IV REFERS TO THEM AS (QUOTE) REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS WITH GOVERNMENTS (UNQUOTE) (PARA. 303) AND (QUOTE) PRINCIPAL OCCASIONS FOR INTENSIVE CONSULTATIONS WITH GOVERNMENTS AT A FORMATIVE STAGE IN THE PREPARATIONS FOR THE CONFERENCE (UNQUOTE) (PARA. 312). WE INTERPRET THIS TO MEAN THAT THE REGIONAL SESSIONS ARE TO BE INTERGOVERNMENTAL IN THE FORMAL SENSE. THIS IS ALSO OUR PREFERENCE, SINCE THERE ARE A MULTITUDE OF EXPERTS GROUPS ALREADY AT WORK ON CONFERENCE PREPARATIONS AND MUCH UNCLASSIFIED

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LESS OPPORTUNITY FOR GOVERNMENTAL INPUTS.

5. IF THE CONFERENCE SECRETARIAT AND TOWNLEY ARE IN FACT THINKING IN TERMS OF AN INTERGOVERNMENTAL REGIONAL MEETING IN DENVER NEXT FEBRUARY, THEN THE US IS NOT PREPARED TO ACT AS HOST GIVEN BUDGET CONSTRAINTS AND THE FACT THAT WE ARE ALREADY INTENDING TO HOST A UNEP-SPONSORED INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON OZONE DEPLETION IN WASHINGTON

THAT SAME MONTH.

6. ALTHOUGH TOWNLEY STATED THAT NO OTHER COUNTRY IN REGION HAS EXPRESSED ANY INTEREST IN HOSTING PREPARATORY SESSION, WE BELIEVE THIS ASPECT MAY NEED FURTHER CONSIDERATION BY CONFERENCE SECRETARIAT. LATIN AMERICAN INTEREST AND NEEDS IN DESERTIFICATION PROBLEM UNCLEAR TO US, BUT HOLDING MEETING IN CENTRAL OR SOUTH AMERICA WOULD PROBABLY BE MORE CONDUCIVE TO ATTRACTING THE NECESSARY LEVEL OF LATIN PARTICIPATION AND A FRANK AND UN-

CONSTRAINED DISCUSSION OF THE ISSUES THEY PERCEIVE.

7. FOR MOUSKEY (GENEVA) - PLEASE CONVEY TO TOWNLEY ESSENCE OF PARAS. 3, 4, 5 AND 6 BUT AVOID PRESSING FOR EARLY REACTION SINCE WE BELIEVE IMPORTANT THAT TOLBA BE PARTY TO NEXT ROUND OF CORRESPONDENCE ON THIS SUBJECT.

8. FOR NOZIGLIA (NAIROBI) - PLEASE MAKE LOW KEY INQUIRY TO APPROPRIATE SENIOR UNEP OFFICIALS SEEKING GUIDANCE ON INTENDED NATURE OF REGIONAL PREPARATORY MEETINGS, AND USING THE OPPORTUNITY TO CONVEY GIST OF ABOVE MESSAGE, PARTICULARLY THE ISSUES RAISED IN PARAS. 4 AND 6. ROBINSON

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